

FACT SHEET

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new - Jennie Kitching

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR PARENTS

Knowing Your Parents

How well do you really know your parents? This may sound like a strange question, but it is entirely possible to live with people for many years and yet not really know them. Understanding is a two-way street. You want your parents to know you, understand and appreciate your feelings, problems and wishes. Your parents want you to understand them too. Only in this way can you help and appreciate them. The following quiz should help you discover how much you know about your parents and their problems.

Questions about Dad

1. Where does your father work?
2. Exactly what sort of work does he do? (Be as specific as you can).
3. What hours does he work each week?
4. Does he get a paid vacation each year? How long?
5. What are his favorite hobbies?
6. Is your father a sports fan? If so, what team does he support?
7. What are your father's favorite TV programs?
8. Does he drink coffee? With or without cream and sugar?
9. To what organizations does your father belong? Has he ever been an officer?
10. How far did your father go in school?
11. Did he have to work when in school?
12. Where was your dad brought up?
13. Did your father's family have a car when he was your age?
14. Name two foods your father doesn't like or can't eat.
15. What worries him most?

Questions about Mother

1. Which does she like least — housework or cooking?

2. What things bother her most?
3. What sort of recreation does your mother like?
4. Name her two best friends.
5. To what organizations does your mother belong?
6. What month is Mother's Day? When is your mother's birthday?
7. Name one of mother's girlhood movie idols.
8. What is your mother's favorite dish?
9. When mother was a girl, was she good at sports? Which ones?
10. Where was your mother born?
11. How much education did your mother receive?
12. Did she have to work when she was in school?
13. What dances were popular when your mother was a teenager?
14. What types of radio programs does she like best?
15. What types of clothes does your mother like?

Questions about the Family

1. How much does it cost each month to support the family?
2. What is the monthly telephone bill?
3. How much does it cost to run the car each month? Is the car paid in full now?
4. How much is the rent, or mortgage payment, on the house (or apartment)?
5. Does your father have life insurance?
6. Does the family have medical or hospital insurance?
7. Where did your dad and mother first meet?
8. Where did they live after they were first married?
9. Did your mother work after she was married?
10. Has either parent ever been hospitalized for illness?

Score five points for each correct answer (possible 200). A score of 150 to 200 shows that communications are excellent between you and your parents and you know them well. A score of 100 to 145 is fair. A score of 100 or below indicates poor understanding. Are you trying to know your parents as people with problems, likes and dislikes, feelings and responsibilities?

What Youth Expect of Parents

When high school students were asked in a survey what kind of parents they wanted, these were some of their comments.

ON LOVE: "Home is where people love each other. We want to be sure our parents will love us no matter what happens. And it's so much better if Mother's there when we get home from school and if Dad gets home on time so we can all have dinner together, tell what we've been doing and plan and sing a while afterwards."

ON UNDERSTANDING: "We want parents we can take our troubles to and be sure they'll understand. Some parents won't listen or let their children explain. They should try to see things a little more from our point of view. The way the world is today is just as hard on us as it is on them."

ON TRUST: "Our parents could trust us more than they often do. They should tell us what we need to know about dating without being old-fashioned. Then they should put us on our own and expect the best of us so we have something to live up to."

ON JOINT PLANNING: "We want parents who realize we're growing up and who will stand beside us, not over us; the kind who are ready to talk things over instead of trying to boss us. We do want the benefit of their guidance in important matters, but we don't want to be nagged about every little thing. What we hate most is being dictated to. After all, this is a democracy!"

ON RESPECT: "We want our parents to respect us and treat us like teenage people, not children. It is fine when they say, 'you're old enough to decide for yourself' and even ask our advice on family problems. Then we really feel like persons. We want to respect our parents, too, and be really proud of them."

ON PRIVACY: "We want parents who are interested in what we are doing, but not 'nosey,' who don't listen in on the telephone or look through our letters or personal things. We need a room to retreat to when things get too thick — a place for our junk and hobbies, for pounding and painting. A real rumpus room helps."

ON RESPONSIBILITY: "We want to do our share of family tasks and duties, but why can't we talk over who is to do what and why? Then it's all the more interesting and we can feel that home is really ours, too. But we do need free time to get our homework done and to join in activities that help our community."

ON FRIENDSHIP: "Parents should understand that we need both boyfriends and girlfriends, let us choose them for ourselves and make them feel welcome at our house. Of course, we want Dad and Mom to know our friends and be in the house when they're there but not hang around all the time. We want to have some fun just in our own way, then we would feel like staying home more."

ON RELIGION: "It's good to feel our parents have a religion they're sincerely trying to live by, in the family and everywhere else. It is really nice to have grace at meals and for the whole family to go to church. It makes us feel we really belong and gives us something to build on."

As you read the comments, in what ways do your parents live up to your expectations? In what ways do you feel they can improve?

How You Can Help

You have a part in helping your mother and father to be the kind of parents you want and need.

Accept them as they are is a good first step. This does not mean you like and admire everything about them. Perhaps there are ways you wish your parents were different. There may be things they do that you don't like, or there are things they do not do which you wish they would. But they are what they are — with good points and bad. They are only human, with human weaknesses, faults, feelings, ideas, attitudes, hopes and dreams.

Above all, your parents want and need your love, your understanding and acceptance of them. Every parent wants to feel that his children believe in him, trust him, respect him, but — more important than all — accept him, faults and all. It is not easy to accept the fact that parents can have human weakness. This requires tolerance and understanding on your part, but it is important to your parents, and to better relationships with them, because it stimulates right feelings of sympathy, mutual forbearance and love.

Recognize that being a parent is a hard job. Parents carry far more responsibilities than is sometimes recognized. They carry all the finan-

cial burdens of supporting a family. In some families, earning enough money is left up to dad. In others, mother has to help out or even carry the full load. This task alone is a difficult one in these days of the high cost of living.

There are countless other tasks too: buying and preparing food, keeping the house neat and in good repair, caring for the yard and property, buying and maintaining clothes. Parents have to protect the children from physical harm, safeguard their health, see that they get a proper education, that they have friends and opportunities for social development, intellectual stimulation, develop proper habits, learn how to live with others and develop a strong faith and good morals. Mother and Dad have to provide for the emotional needs of the family: love and affection, sympathy when someone is hurt, courage when someone is afraid. Everything that is required in the way of physical care, emotional support, guidance and instruction at home must be provided by the parents.

Sometimes parents take on civic and community responsibilities, too. They want to improve town government, understand and support the schools so children get a good education, help the church, the youth organizations or the service clubs. Parents often work for community betterment, better aid to the poor, beautification of the town, improved streets, a new library, hospital or nursing home. They sometimes are expected to do too much in their town. But the things they do are often because they are concerned about you and the town in which the family lives.

Appreciate that some adults are better equipped than others for parenthood. Only a few parents have ever had formal education in family living, or the care and raising of children. They often have to learn all of these things after they are married and have children. Some parents attend meetings or join study groups so they can learn how to do a better job. Still, there is much they do not know about you. For, after all, you are different from your brothers and sisters and everyone else in the world, so they have to learn all over about your needs and problems and how they can best help you.

Some parents are better equipped emotionally for parenthood than others. Some parents worry, others do not. Some are more affectionate than others. Some find it easy to have trust and faith, others do not. Some find it easy to show approval; others feel it, but have a hard time expressing it. Some are easygoing and never get upset; others do. Sometimes your parents know what you feel and how to react to you, at other times they do not.



What they are and how they feel has been determined partially by the kind of life they had as children. They had parents too, sometimes good ones, who were able to help them to be the kind of people who can best help you; at other times poor ones, who made it hard for them to be good parents to you.

Be willing to take a part of the responsibility for the maintenance of your home and the care of the whole family. Youth often wish parents would do many things, but do not realize every child is a part of the family, too, and, therefore are partially responsible for the happiness and well being of every other family member. Your parents cannot build a happy family without you.

Reprinted from:

**Getting Along With Your Parents, by Dr.
F. Philip Rice, Family Life Specialist, Co-
operative Extension Service, University of
Maine, Orono.**